

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-16 (canceled).

17. (new) A method of processing postal items in a sorting machine with sorting outputs, comprising the steps of:

forming an image of a current item including destination address information,
performing automatic OCR recognition of the destination address information from said image and in cooperation with a reference address base,

forwarding said item towards one of said sorting outputs in accordance with the recognized destination address information,

and if said destination address information is not recognized unambiguously, said method further comprising the steps of:

providing several ambiguous possible delivery points from results of said destination address recognition processing for said current item,

detecting if said ambiguous possible delivery points are included in a single delivery round, said delivery round comprising an ordered set of delivery points followed by a postman in delivering mail items,

in response to said detection, computing a volume mail data for a delivery range defined by said ambiguous possible delivery points, and

forwarding said current mail item towards a sorting output corresponding to one of said ambiguous possible delivery points if said computed volume mail data is less than a predetermined threshold.

18. (new) A method of processing postal items according to claim 17, wherein several ordered lists of delivery points are recorded in a database in correspondence with several delivery offices, each list of ordered delivery points defining a delivery round and being associated with a delivery office in said database,

wherein said method further comprises the steps of :

if said ambiguous possible delivery points are not included in a single delivery round defined in said data base, computing several cumulated extra cost values, associated respectively to said several ambiguous possible delivery points, from predetermined extra costs values representing extra costs of destination error if said current item is delivered either to a wrong delivery office, or to a wrong delivery round, or to a wrong delivery point, each accumulated extra cost value being an accumulation of said extra costs values which is increased when a detection is made that a delivery office or a delivery round associated with a current ambiguous possible delivery point in said data base is different from a delivery office or a delivery round associated to an other ambiguous possible delivery point in said data base,

identifying a smallest cumulated extra costs value among said computed cumulated extra costs values, and

forwarding said current mail item towards a sorting output corresponding to one of said ambiguous possible delivery points if said smallest cumulated extra costs value is less than a second predetermined threshold.

19. (new) A postal sorting machine comprising an automatic address resolution system designed to carry out the method of claim 17.

20. (new) A postal sorting machine comprising an automatic address resolution system designed to carry out the method of claim 18.